DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 199 882 EA 013 383

TITLE	Alternative Schools and Programs: Five Descriptions. Technical Assistance Bulletin 37.
INSTITUTION	National School Resource Network, Washington, D.C.
SPONS AGENCY	Department of Justice, Washington, D.C. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
PUB DATE	[80]
GRANT	79JS-AX-0019
NOTE	11p.
AVAILABLE FROM	National School Resource Network, 5530 Wisconsin Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20015 (free).
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Behavior Problems; *Discipline Problems; *Educational Innovation; Elementary Secondary Education; *Nontraditional Education; Program Descriptions; *Student Behavior; *Technical Assistance

ABSTRACT

During the past ten years, many school districts have established alternative schools or programs for students who are seriously disruptive and academically unsuccessful. This bulletin describes five different types of alternative programs that have been effective in dealing with disruptive youth. They include the Tri-C Community Centered Classroom Program in Los Angeles (California); Project Advocate in Geneva (Illinois); Positive Alternatives To Student Suspension (PASS) in Pinellas County (Florida); For Love of Children in Harpers Ferry (West Virginia); and the Westside Alternative School in Omaha (Nebraska). These programs are currently in operation and represent a range of strategies. For example, Tri-C uses a family-type setting, intensive counseling, and community resources. Project Advocate operates a behavior disorder component. PASS includes eight programs for school staff and students. For Love of Children is an outdoor living and education experience, and the Westside Alternative School focuses on academics, parental involvement, and vocational training. (Author/MLF)

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ED199882

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Technical Assistance Bulletin

Alternative Schools and Programs: Five Descriptions

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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Summary

During the past ten years, many school districts have established alternative schools or programs for students who are seriously disruptive and academically unsuccessful. This bulletin describes five different types of alternative programs that have been effective in dealing with disruptive youth. They include the Tri-C Community Centered Classroom Program in Los Angeles, California; Project Advocate in Geneva, Illinois; P.A.S.S., Pinellas County, Florida; For Love of Children, Harpers Ferry, West Virginia and the Westside Alternative School in Omaha, Nebraska. All of these programs are outstanding and currently in operation. Certainly, other alternative schools are being developed and designed--however, these examples do represent a range of programs and strategies. For example, Tri-C uses a family-type setting, intensive counseling, and community resources. Project Advocate operates a Behavior Disorder component. P.A.S.S. includes eight programs for school staff and students. For Love of Children is an outdoor hiring and education experience, and the Westside Alternative School focuses on academics, parental involvement, and vocational training.

EA 013 353

The Problem

Some students not only fail to achieve academically, but also act out their frustrations and resentments and disturb others in class. Their disruptive behavior often leads to suspension or expulsion from school and, consequently, they fall even further behind academically. Eventually, many drop out of school. This combination of circumstances results in dissatisfaction for the student, the school, and the community. Students are ill-prepared if they leave school; the schools have not been successful in educating students; and the community ultimately suffers with uneducated, unprepared, and troublesome youth.

As disciplinary tools, traditional suspension and expulsion exacerbate the problems associated with disruptive behavior; they virtually never solve them. Research also indicates that large numbers of the students losing out on their education are non-white. At the time, out-of-school suspension is often viewed by the students involved as a reward rather than punishment (since it gets them out of a difficult and unsatisfying situation); and it increases the likelihood of the suspended students getting into trouble in the community while being excluded from school. In sum, removing students from school neither disciplines nor educates them as society intended its educational institutions to do.

The Solution

For more than ten years, school districts across the nation have been devising alternative programs for students whose behavior would traditionally make them candidates for expulsion or out-of-school suspension. The alternative programs vary greatly in the kinds of students they serve, the way the programs are struc-

Prepared under Grant #79JS-AX-0049 from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the NSRN and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

tured, and by the underlying theory or orientation that drives the program. Although the specific goals and strategies of the alternative programs are different, they share in one form or another, the desire to influence students' behavior in such a way that they will learn how to learn and how to do so without disrupting others. This is accomplished by focusing, in differing degrees, on the student's disruptive behavior pattern as such, the student's broader behavior patterns and attitudes, and the student's academic deficiencies.

Care is taken to structure a learning environment where students can gain basic academic and social skills, participate in decision making, and take responsibility for their actions. Programs are designed to help students experience scholastic success and social approval, come to feel good about themselves, and look forward to more promising futures. Effective alternative programs are, in general, characterized by a small, personalized facility geographically separated from the conventional high school, and a high ratio of adults to students. Staff need to be carefully chosen--highly competent, caring, and prepared to attend to the students' special needs for counseling, role models, and medical services. Instruction is usually individualized to overcome specific deficiencies and often group-structured to develop interaction skills. There is frequently a programmatic thrust toward vocational preparation. Some alternatives involve parents and teachers as well as students.

This bulletin presents a sampling of five alternative programs representing a range of thoughtful and balanced modifications that demonstrate positive approaches to changing behaviors of disruptive youth. (Note: The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Department of Justice is currently funding a number of alternative schools across the country.)

COMMUNITY CENTERED CLASSROOM PROGRAM. (Tri-C)
Los Angeles Unified School District, California

Program. Tri-C is an academic, rehabilitative program aimed at preparing students for successful reentry into productive educational and/or occupational settings following their expulsion from school. The program was begun in February, 1975, and uses a family-type setting, intensive counseling, and community resources to help students improve their self image, basic skills, and ability to cope with their environment. The average minimum time in the program is six weeks, and there are almost no re-assignments.

Students in the expulsion process are referred to Tri-C by the Office of Juvenile Court Relations following the principal's expulsion conference with the parents. When a referral is received, the Tri-C intake counselor arranges a mandatory intake interview with the parents, student, Tri-C counselor, and teacher. As a result of this meeting, the student is either enrolled in Tri-C or referred to a more suitable diversion service. If the student is accepted, expectations, goals, rules, and procedures are discussed and clarified at that time.

Parents are advised to attend scheduled parent group meetings, individual conferences, and have responsibility for checking their child's progress in the academic and behavioral areas. Optional visits to the classroom are also encouraged.

Although all sites operate a minimum day academic program, sites differ in geographic location, pupil population, and personal styles of teachers and staff. However, common characteristics exist that set Tri-C apart from regular schools. They include:

1. The development of a "family" feeling at each site.

2. Regular, structured group counseling at each site with a counselor co-leading the group. A qualified, community counselor is used whenever possible.

3. Close and regular contact with other significant adults in the life of the Tri-C student.

4. Group instruction and group activities, as well as individualized instruction.

5. Structured exposure to environments, cultures, activities outside the student's previous experiences.

6. A team approach utilized by staff.

Physical Setup. Tri-C classrooms are located throughout the district in leased facilities separate from regular schools. Depending on the community involved and available suitable space, they may be housed in a portion of a church, community center, townhall, or similar type of building. Exact locations of the sites may change from year to year with the demand for Tri-C services. Bus transportation is provided. A large classroom and two adjoining offices are required to accommodate the maximum of 10 students per site.

Target Population. Students accepted into Tri-C are secondary students who have been recommended for expulsion, have been expelled, or have no other feasible educational option. Only about 60 percent of the referred students are enrolled in regular classes. The remainder may not be interested in an educational program, may enter a trade school or the Armed Services, move out of the district, go to work full time, or be incarcerated. In its first four years, Tri-C enrolled slightly over 1,000 students and assisted 400 more. Nearly 80 percent of the Tri-C students are black and 10 percent are females. Since parental involvement is a major theme of the program, they can be regarded as an ancillary target population.

Staff. Each site has a full-time teacher and two educational aides. Teachers are selected by area principals for their demonstrated concern and skill in working with hard-to-manage students. A support team includes counselors, a nurse, a health educator, a reading specialist, and a work experience coordinator, who visit the classroom sites on a regular rotating basis. A full-time counselor is assigned for every two or three classrooms, and one district administrator supervises all Tri-C sites.

Budgets. The annual operating budget for the Tri-C Program in Los Angeles averages around $500,000 for a total student population of slightly under 300. This figure includes salaries, rent, supplies, and daily operating expenses.

Evidence of Effectiveness. Pooled evaluation data from the 12 sites operating during the 1978-79 school year indicate that three of Tri-C's four implementation objectives on scholastic achievement, school adjustment, and parental approval were not only met, but slightly exceeded.

- Scholastic achievement 62 percent of the Tri-C students received satisfactory evaluations each school month on scholastic achievement. (The standard for this objective was at least 60 percent.)

- School adjustment (i.e., reduction or absence of verbal or physical hostility, coming to school under the influence of drugs, disrespect toward staff, and failure to comply with other site rules) 62 percent of the students received satisfactory evaluations or better each school month or on their final progress reports. (The standard for this objective was at least 60 percent.)

- Positive parental feedback on a parent survey form, nearly 90 percent of the parents who responded (51 percent of the total surveyed) indicated that observable positive changes in their youngster's attitudes occurred during this enrollment in the Tri-C Program. (The standard for this objective was at least 50 percent of Tri-C students' parents.)

The only objective not reached across the 12 sites focused on attendance. The objective states that at least 70 percent of the Tri-C students will be in attendance each day at each site. Attendance ranged from 91 percent at six sites, 81 percent at five sites, and 65 percent at the remaining site. Reasons given for non-illness absences were court appearances, incarceration, baby-sitting for younger siblings, family illness, refusal to attend school, and suspension by Tri-C staff. Overall, only 20 percent of the Tri-C students subsequently leave school altogether or become involved in minor incidents while still in school.

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PROJECT ADVOCATE
Geneva, Illinois

Program. Project Advocate is a self-contained, intensive-learning environment for students with severe communication or behavior disorders. Elementary students, ages five to nine years old, who are behind their grade norms, are assigned to the Communications Disorder part of the program. Students 7 through 17, displaying academic or behavior problems, are served in the Behavior Disorder part of the program. This program is described below.

The Behavior Disorder Program focuses on academic achievement, positive reinforcement, counseling, and parent involvement. Approximately 70 percent of the students in the program who exhibit behavior disorders are also found to be mildly to moderately learning disabled. Therefore, a strong emphasis is placed on helping them succeed in academic subjects. This effort is strengthened by the consistent use of positive reinforcement and a token economy with which students can "purchase" privileges (e.g., lunches, trips, extra physical education time).

Three to four times per week, students take part in group counseling sessions, according to age and social maturity. Individual counseling is available as needed. Group counseling focuses on reducing inappropriate behavior through work on such areas as decision-making, values clarification, and relaxation training. Parents are encouraged to participate in parent and family therapy sessions to improve their child's progress.

Students are referred to Project Advocate through the Special Education Departments of several local schools in the Tri-Cities (Batavia, Geneva, and St. Charles) area, about 40 miles west of Chicago. They are screened again by the project staff and admitted to the program on the basis of their need. Individualized instruction is designed to meet the requirements of each youngster's academic deficiencies and learning disabilities.

A behavior level system is woven throughout the classroom portion of Project Advocate. Upon admission, students are assigned to a behavior level from which they are expected to advance as a result of their improved behavior. Reaching each higher level requires exhibiting more adaptive and constructive behaviors, and each advance carries with it more privileges and advantages. When behavior is disruptive, however, quiet training procedures are used (i.e., isolation, time-out room).

The students participate in the Behavior Disorder program on an average of three or four school semesters with usual vacation breaks. In addition to interim testing and progress reviews, the Project Advocate staff, in collaboration with staff at each student's community school, assesses the student's readiness to return to regular classes. In this process, academic skills and knowledge are tested, and particular attention is given to assessing the student's mastery of social skills and interactions as evidenced in his/her classroom and other social behavior.

Physical Set-up. Project Advocate is a self-contained unit housed in a rented facility completely separate from the participating schools. It has eight classrooms, offices, and a gym area. Buses bring the students from the various communities.

Target Population. Project Advocate's Behavior Disorder Program accepts students ranging in age from 7 to 17 years. Of the 65 enrolled in spring 1980, most were 10 years old or older. Approximately 60 percent were white, 30 percent black, and 10 percent Hispanic. Males and females were about equally represented. About 25 percent came from families receiving public assistance and an equal number had received psychiatric treatment.

The students are referred from their local schools because they have been noncompliant and disruptive or physically abusive. They tend to have severe emotional or behavior problems and are socially maladjusted. Many are close to becoming hard-core delinquents; their social actions and responses are inappropriate, impulsive, and irresponsible. Among secondary level students, motivation is a common problem.

Staff. Staff are selected for their educational special training and demonstrated success with young people who have learning disabilities and behavior disorders. The full-time staff consists of an administrator, a counselor, and a social worker, eight teachers, 10 teacher aides, and an occupational therapist. In addition, part-time services are provided by a diagnostic consultant, a physical education teacher,

and speech therapist. The staff participates in up to 60 hours of in-service training each year with an intensive five-to-eight day session occurring before the opening of school in the fall. Topics for the preschool sessions have included curriculum planning, behavior management, and beginning counseling skills.

Budget. At the current time, spring 1980, the cost per student in the Behavior Disorder Program is approximately $7,000 per school year. For 65 students, instructional materials cost $1,000; inservice software, $500; affective curriculum $500.

Evidence of Effectiveness. Assessment measures indicate that Project Advocate's Behavior Disorder Program is effective. The Brigance Diagnostic Inventory of basic skills, for instance, shows that prior to the secondary level, students make academic gains at the normal rate (i.e., one month's skill gain per month of school). At the secondary level, however, although gains continue, they are less consistently near the norms. Nevertheless, by the end of their second semester, 85 percent of the program students were completing assignments and 90 percent of the work was correct. Use of social skills instruments indicate, for instance, an 80 percent decrease in inappropriate behaviors, a finding substantiated by staff observation. Self-reports from students and parents reveal improvement in parent-child relationship skills, as a result of this alternative school program.

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POSITIVE ALTERNATIVES TO STUDENT SUSPENSION (P.A.S.S.)
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Program. The P.A.S.S. Program was begun in 1972 and includes eight distinct programs which involve students, parents, teachers, and other school staff in communications skills development, and general growth experiences. The initial focus of the program (created under a Title III ESEA grant which funded a Pupil Services Demonstration Project), was to explore alternative approaches for meeting critical learner needs in the county and to develop alternatives for students experiencing a crisis. However, as the program evolved, solution strategies were designed for preventive and developmental, as well as crisis/remedial interventions.

Preventive/Developmental Activities

- Staff Development for a Humanistic School. This program focuses on improving communications and expression among the entire school staff. Programs are scheduled as one day workshops or as seminars which continue during the school year. Helping educational personnel explore constructive responses to questions such as "How can I experience more pleasure from my work?" or "How can I be more effective in my job?" is the focus of the sessions.

- Humanistic Activities in the Regular Classroom. P.A.S.S. has designed a twelve week program to help create a positive environment in the classroom. One hour each week is set aside for activities that encourage openness, sharing, social awareness and personal growth. The P.A.S.S. psychologist and/or social worker frequently initiates the activities in target schools. As teachers participate in other P.A.S.S. programs, they are able to invent and initiate their own "humanistic" activities. (Note: A descriptive outline of recommended activities is available upon request from P.A.S.S.)

- Basic Encounter for Secondary School Students. This is a guided group interaction program for students. Sessions are held once a week for two hours either during or after school. The program lasts 12 weeks. Developmental group counseling and other applied behavioral science techniques are used. Students are introduced to the program through classroom visits by the P.A.S.S. psychologist and social worker. Participation is voluntary, although some students are encouraged to participate by school staff or parents.

- Basic Encounter for School Personnel. This is a guided group interaction

program for teachers. Small group encounter activities, including values clarification and transactional analysis, are used to help teachers explore meaningful topics. Participants meet once a week for twelve weeks. Each session lasts two hours and is held after school.

- Parent Training Groups. P.A.S.S. has developed a six session program for parents. Each session lasts two hours and sessions are scheduled in the evening so that parents can attend. Techniques of parent effectiveness training, behavior modification, transactional analysis and values clarification are used.

Crisis/Remedial Components

- Time-Out Room. This is an alternative educational environment for temporary placement of students when appropriate--but is viewed positively by school staff. The room is designed so that students have time to talk out problems with a "facilitative listener." The "listener" helps students forecast consequences, explore alternatives, make decisions, and develop specific plans which frequently lead to more productive behavior in the student's regular classes. Students can request the services or be sent by the school personnel.

- A Student's School Survival Course. This course is designed for students who have displayed frequent behavioral problems at school. This 12 week program teaches students that it is possible to survive in school and to receive positive feedback from teachers and other students. The program requires a skilled leader and a time commitment of one hour weekly for each group.

- A Student's Home Survival Course. This course helps students find ways of positively working out relationships at home and dealing with problems they experience with their parents or siblings. The course uses the techniques and principles of Reality Therapy, Transactional Analysis and Rational Behavior Therapy. It is also held for twelve weeks and can be presented during or after school.

Physical Set-Up. The courses and activities are available throughout the school year in selected schools throughout Pinellas County, and in response to requests for them. Depending on the size of the group, they are held in classrooms, or other suitable school space.

Target Population. While some of the P.A.S.S. offerings are still directed at students whose behavior problems can result in suspension from school, more of them seem to be equally suitable for students, parents, and school personnel who may or may not be experiencing particular or serious difficulties. That is, virtually anyone can benefit from concentrating on improving his or her self-knowledge, communication skills, and general awareness of others. As the P.A.S.S. staff puts it in writing about the humanistic school course: "Participation is open to all school personnel with the rationale that the cooperation of each staff member is necessary to effectively humanize the school setting."

Staff. The psychologists, social workers, and counselors are required to have master's degrees in their respective fields. In addition, they must have experienced workshops in selected related techniques and therapy (e.g., values clarification, effectiveness training skills), be proficient in planning, implementation, and delivering staff development programs and providing direct services for students. They are expected to be skilled group leaders and able to conduct humanistic activities, survival courses, and encounter groups. Finally, in addition to implementing most of the eight courses, they staff the time-out rooms.

Time-out room workers are required to have at least a bachelor's degree in one of the applied behavior sciences with either real experience or relevant training in establishing helping relationships with youth.

Budget. Since use of additional equipment and materials is minimal, operational costs for P.A.S.S. are mostly attributable to the salaries of a school psychologist and social worker, and a time-out room worker for each participating school. Using spring 1980 figures, the per student cost is estimated at approximately five dollars, if half or more of the students in each school used the P.A.S.S. services.

Evidence of Effectiveness. Early evaluation data comparing senior high schools that had

P.A.S.S. programs and schools that did not, reveal a significant reduction in suspensions during the early years of the program. On the basis of current data, Pinellas County has extended the P.A.S.S. program from the original three demonstration schools to 13.

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FOR LOVE OF CHILDREN (FLOC) WILDERNESS SCHOOL
Harpers Ferry, West Virginia

Program. The FLOC Wilderness School is a privately operated, outdoor-living residential program licensed by the West Virginia Department of Education. The program began in 1972 and works with boys from 9 to 15 years old with serious behavior and academic problems or those who may be in trouble with the law. Schools, courts, and parents can make referrals to the school.

The Wilderness school is an untraditional, learning and life experience for students. It is designed to help students get in touch with themselves, learn how to relate and live with others, and how to learn for themselves.

The Wilderness setting is the environment the boys live in, adapt to, and experience. A group of ten boys lives with two counselors in a large weatherproof tent for a year. The students plan their activities each week and make all arrangements for them. Usually this requires detailed planning and scheduling, collecting information, materials, equipment and other resources, and making sure that their regular camp responsibilities are met.

There are no regular classroom sessions in this alternative program. Instead, instructions are presented as the need for particular skills and knowledge emerge. For example, math may be taught when measuring quantities in cooking or in measuring wood and calculating distance for hikes. Grammar is taught when letters are written requesting information. Reports on activities and social studies are made which relate to current events, including the history and laws of people and places students visit.

Because of the wide variety of activities that can be set for a week, the trainers/instructors may range from the program counselors, cooks, or other staff, to park service personnel, geologists, museum guides, artists, or craft workers.

The weekly plan that each village (i.e., group of 10) draws up becomes, in fact, a contract. If anyone experiences a problem, or cannot fulfill his part in the planned activities, he must work out with the whole group, since all are parties to the contract. A great deal of interpersonal- and self-learning occurs in the group context as the boys experience how the actions and attitudes of one person affect the plans and well-being of others. When difficulties and problems arise, they are settled by group discussion, regardless of the time required to reach a decision. Staff members have veto power over group decisions but use it with great restraint. Instead, they prefer to guide students into appropriate activities and behaviors through their own group deliberations on the issues involved.

Students take both personality and academic tests upon admission to the program, and academic tests are repeated every six months. An intake interview at the school is required of all students and their parents. When a student leaves, he has a joint meeting with school staff, his parents, and the referring agency where past progress is reviewed and future progress encouraged.

Each week staff family workers telephone the boys' parents to discuss problems and progress and reinforce the importance of parental cooperation. Counseling sessions for parents living in the same general area are encouraged so that they can share and work together on matters related to their children. One weekend per month, the school closes down while all the students go home for a four day weekend. Parents are expected to provide transportation and appropriate supervision for their children during these visits.

Physical Set-up. The school is located in a rugged, wooded area about 12 miles from

the town of Harpers Ferry, and 8 miles over rough terrain from the nearest road. One permanent building houses offices, supplies, a library (but no TV), lounge/meeting area, and food services. Shower and toilet facilities are located in a separate, detached shelter, and laundry is done off-campus. Each group of 10 boys lives with two male counselors in a large weatherproof tent for a year. This grouping constitutes a social entity called a "village." Two days a week, the village cooks in its own campsite. Otherwise, the four villages eat in a single building. Students are required to assist in the cooking and camp maintenance chores.

Target Population. FLOC draws its 40 students from the surrounding region of Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia, but soon it expects to accept applicants from West Virginia and Pennsylvania as well. Currently, only boys participate in the FLOC programs, but a comparable program is being planned for girls.

Among the admission criteria are that the boys must be between the ages of 9 and 15 and not be psychotic, retarded, nor have been sentenced for a particularly violent crime. The boy must state that he wants to attend the Wilderness School, and he must have a family to whom he will return after his stay. Although it varies somewhat, approximately 60 percent of the present students are white. All have serious disruptive problems when they enter.

Staff. The staff of FLOC is selected primarily on the basis of their concern for, and ability to work closely and consistently with youngsters who have serious behavior problems. Some are teachers and all have teaching skills which are suited for this structured, but untraditional, learning context. The director is assisted by three supervisors, nine counselors, two family workers, two maintenance workers, two cooks, and a secretary. Most staff are men, but where it is feasible, women are employed.

The professional staff resides at the school during their workdays, and is available to the boys for individual or group counseling/discussion sessions as requested. However, emphasis of the program is on group tasks and problem solving rather than on therapy per se. Village counselors are addressed as "Chief Tom" or "Chief Joe," and participate in group decisionmaking indirectly through the guidance and structure they provide their village.

Budget. Funds for operating FLOC Wilderness School come from the referring organizations, including juvenile services, the courts, schools, and occasionally, parents. In some cases, the fees are divided between agencies and a few scholarships are available for students who are in need of financial assistance. The monthly cost per student in the spring of 1980 was $1,100 which covered room, board, and tuition.

Each village is allocated a working fund to support its activities, but if the members elect to undertake a costly project (e.g., a trip to Maine or Florida) as some have done, they must raise the extra money required themselves. The process of handling their village fund or raising extra money provides additional learning opportunities for students.

Evaluation. Records show that 70 percent of the boys who lived at FLOC for a period of six months to two years returned to their regular schools and to their homes without experiencing further serious troubles with school or legal authorities. During their first year at home, family workers contact the parents of returned students each month to follow up on the students' adjustment and continued progress at home and in school. Phone and letter surveys over the years indicate a high level of satisfaction with accomplishments of the FLOC Wilderness School among students, parents, school, and other referring agencies as well as the FLOC staff itself.

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WESTSIDE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL
Omaha, Nebraska

Program. Westside Alternative School is designed for students who are having or who have displayed inappropriate behavior or are frequently truant. Its goal is to return students to the regular high school program within one school year. The pro-

gram focuses on academics, parental involvement, and vocational training. The program operates on a double session schedule. Half of the approximately 80 students attend academic classes and participate in counseling during the morning, and go to vocational classes for the afternoon. The other students do the same in reverse order.

Students from grades 10 through 12 are referred to the Westside Alternative School mostly from suburban Westside High School with others attending from the area parochial school. Each referral is reviewed by an admissions committee consisting of a school psychologist, Alternative School staff, and counselors and student deans of Westside High (and parochial school counselor when appropriate). When a student is accepted, a complete needs assessment is conducted and a suitable program is developed to meet his or her identified needs. In addition, the staff meets with the student and parents to clarify the program goals and procedures, and to develop a statement of understanding to be signed by all involved.

The usual five-unit semester of academic content is divided into three and one-half week units to provide more manageable and precise learning segments as well as quicker and more frequent feedback on achievement. At the end of each unit, reports are issued and feedback is solicited from parents. When the semester ends, the student's scholastic record and behavior pattern is reviewed, a conference held with the parents, and a decision is reached about whether the student is ready to return to the regular high school. Most students are ready to return within two semesters (i.e., one academic year).

The vocational portion of the program is located in a nearby technical school and is taught by that school's regular faculty. The Alternative School students join the regular vocational students in classes. Courses are career-oriented (e.g., mechanics, culinary arts, and hair cutting). For business courses, however, students go to Westside High or the parochial school and take part in regular classes.

Weekly group counseling sessions are held at the Alternative School and are largely oriented toward acquiring life skills and making career decisions. Speakers from relevant social agencies or businesses often come in to talk with the students. Those students in need of special help or therapeutic counseling work with the secondary school psychologist or are referred to community agencies for assistance with their problems.

Physical Set-up. The Alternative School is housed in a facility rented from a church and removed from Westside High. Students are responsible for their own transportation. The Alternative School and the vocational technical school both separate the students from their regular high school peer groups and habits (except for those business students who return to the regular school for classes). The difference in schedules also contributes to the separation.

Target Population. On an average day, the student body numbers about 80, with approximately 130 participants each school year. Students come from grades 10 through 12 of Westside High School or the parochial high school in what is essentially a suburban area. Boys and girls are present in about equal numbers, and 90 percent of the students are white. Grades 11 and 12 are more heavily represented than is grade 10. Approximately 90 percent of the students who enter have an overall pattern of failure in school, and some have developed patterns of truancy and unacceptable behavior as well.

Staff. The Alternative School staff consists of a full-time director and four teachers, plus two teacher aides, a secretary, and a combined counselor and reading specialist. In case reviews, they are supplemented by the school psychologist, regular school deans, and counselors, who may also be called upon if needed at other times. The Westside High School principal is the chief administrator of the program. The staff is recruited from the regular high school academic departments because of their interest in and success with the kinds of students who attend the Alternative School.

Budget. An average yearly cost for the Westside Alternative School in the spring of 1980 was estimated at around $130,000, of which approximately 85 percent would be charged to salaries.

Evidence of Effectiveness. Because of the carefully structured nature of the Westside Alternative School program and the extensive attention to individual students, discipline problems within the school are minimal.

Data reveal that 70 percent of all students return to their regular school or graduate, and most do so in 1.9 semesters--just short of the one year period mentioned in the program goal. Furthermore, staff, students', and parents' responses all indicate satisfaction with the program.

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